

Introduction: I can remember a ‘God is in this’ conversation I had with a fellow pastor over fifteen years ago. He took something I said to its logical conclusion with this statement: IF someone does not know Jesus and what happens in this world does not make him depressed, THEN he is not paying attention or something is wrong with his thinking and feeling. *** There are two important parts to what he said. First, those who do not know Jesus are more likely to be depressed. In addition, the pressures of life in this fallen world affect everyone, whether people are inclined to pay attention and reflect, or not. Jesus does not always heal depression, either completely or all at once; but, He does make it possible for His people to cope as they encourage one another. One more truth to consider: in our country today, up to one half of all people are currently dealing with despair and depression. Almost everyone will experience depression at some time in his life. *** From today’s story we learn from the prophet Elijah about the dangers of spiritual warfare. The enemy of God and His people is a sore loser and he seeks to take down those who are God’s most devoted and effective servants. *** Just prior to today’s story, Elijah had called down fire from Israel’s God and destroyed all the prophets of the pagan ‘god’ of thunder and rain, Baal. Then he prayed and a long drought came to an end when God sent a heavy rain. *** When the wicked king Ahab told his more wicked wife Jezebel what happened, she vowed to kill Elijah. When he became aware of her intentions he went on foot seventy miles south. His exhaustion and feeling alone in the midst of evil caused him to pray that he would die. Are we surprised? *** Let’s see how God treated His beloved prophet.

I. Jezebel’s fury and Elijah’s flight. (1 Kings 19:1-8)

A. Jezebel swears to kill Elijah. (1 Kings 19:1-2)

1. Then Ahab told to Jezebel all Elijah had done and that he had slain all the prophets of Baal. (Verse 1)

Ahab tells Jezebel: This connects what follows with what Elijah did on Mt. Carmel (chapter 18:16-46).

2. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say: so will the ‘gods’ do (to me) and more also if at this time tomorrow I do not make your life as the life of one of them. (Verse 2)

Jezebel threatens Elijah: She strongly swears to get revenge on Elijah by doing to him what he did to her false ‘prophets’.

B. Elijah flees to Beersheba, then Mt. Sinai. (1 Kings 19:3-8)

1. Then Elijah saw, rose up and went on foot for his life and came to Beersheba in Judah and left his servant there. (Verse 3)

Elijah sees: As His prophet, God showed Elijah what Jezebel had planned for him.

He goes to Beersheba: He walked the seventy miles from Mt. Carmel on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea to the southernmost town in Judah, Beersheba (well of sevenfold oath).

2. And, he himself went in the wilderness a day’s journey, then came and sat down under a thorn bush and asked that his soul would die: Too much now Yahweh, take my life, I am no better than my fathers. (Verse 4)

Wilderness: The south of Judah is a rocky wilderness with shallow soil. No plants grew above ten feet.

He has scant shade from the sun.

Despair: He is overwhelmed after participating in the miraculous victory of Yahweh over Baal. Let us realize that even God’s chosen servants who have been instruments of His victories can experience exhaustion and depression.

3. Then he lay down and slept; behold! an angel touched him: Rise up! Eat! Then he looked: behold! a disc of bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water; then, he ate and drank and again he laid down. (Verses 5-6)

Angel touches: God sent an angel to gently waken Elijah and show him food and water He provided.

Elijah eats and drinks: Elijah ate and drank, and went back to sleep.

4. Then came again The Angel of Yahweh and touched him a second time: Rise up! Eat! For the journey is too much for you; then he arose, ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and nights to the mountain of God: Horeb. (Verses 7-8)

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Angel of Yahweh: Many people believe The Angel of Yahweh is the pre-incarnate Jesus.

Journey too great: The journey Elijah would take was two hundred eighty miles through rugged terrain with no food or water. It required supernatural strength. Even so, he only averaged seven miles a day in the hot wilderness.

To Mt. Horeb: Mt. Horeb (desert) is Mt. Sinai (thorny) where Yahweh gave His people the Ten Commandments and further instruction. Moses and Elijah would appear with Jesus on another mountain (Matthew 17:1-5).

II. Yahweh’s word to Elijah as both a question and an answer; and, Jesus is glorified in His trouble on The Cross.

(1 Kings 19:9-18 & John 12:27-28)

A. Elijah’s despairing excuse; Yahweh’s mighty wind and small whisper. (1 Kings 19:9-12)

1. Then he came to a cave and lodged there: Behold! The Word of Yahweh to him: What to you here Elijah? (Verse 9)

Word of Yahweh: Yahweh’s first word to His depressed prophet is in the form of a question; but, still, in love and compassion, He is speaking to His faithful prophet in the midst of his depression.

Yahweh speaks to those in depression.

2. Then he said: I have been very zealous for Yahweh The God of the armies because the ‘sons of Israel’ have forsaken Thy covenant, Thy altars have been broken down and Thy prophets have been slain with the sword; and I, only I, remain AND they seek my life to take it. (Verse 10)

Lonely: This is a long lament about his zeal for The True God in the midst of unfaithfulness and violence; but, his final complaint is that he is all alone: lonely and about to be killed.

3. Then He (Yahweh) said: Go forth, stand on the mount before Yahweh. (Verse 11a)

Yahweh: Seemingly ignoring Elijah’s lament, or perhaps re-directing it, Yahweh commands His prophet to go and stand before him on Mt. Horeb as Moses did almost six hundred years earlier.

4. Behold! Yahweh passed by and a great and powerful wind broke apart the stones of the mountain, but He was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but He was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but He was not in the fire. (*Verses 11b-12a*)

Wind, earth and fire: We would expect the awesome all-powerful God to be in these powerful phenomena – but He was not!

5. And after the fire a small whisper voice. (*Verse 12b*)

Small whisper: After the noise of a stone breaking wind and an earthquake, Yahweh speaks to His prophet quietly, in a small whisper. This is UN-expected! We must all realize that while God always provides what we need, it is not always with power, but often in an understated way.

B. Yahweh's word and three-fold plan for Elijah. (*1 Kings 19:13-18*)

1. Then, as Elijah heard, he wrapped his face with his cloak, then went out and stood at the entrance of the cave; and Behold! to him a voice said: What to you here Elijah? (*Verse 13*)

Word: Yahweh repeats His question when Elijah lodged for the night in the cave to Elijah at the cave entrance. In love and compassion, He is still speaks to His prophet in the midst of his depression.

Yahweh speaks to those in depression.

2. Elijah gives Yahweh the exact same long lament about his zeal in the midst of unfaithfulness and violence, complaining he is lonely and about to be killed. (*Verse 14*)

Despair repeats: Elijah is still in despair and depression. Maybe Yahweh did not hear him. The empty pyrotechnics did not help. So, to make his point, he repeats himself verbatim.

3. Then Yahweh said: Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus (four hundred twenty five miles northeast of Mt. Sinai and ninety miles northeast of Mt. Carmel), and having come, anoint Hazael (seeing God) to (be) king of Syria, and Jehu (Yahweh [is] He) son of Nimshi (rescued) you will anoint to (be) king of Israel. (*Verses 15-16a*)

Purpose: Yahweh gives His prophet a mission to appoint two kings: a God-given purpose to distract him from feeling helpless.

4. And Elisha (God [is] salvation) son of Shaphat (judged) of Abel-Mekholah (meadow of dancing) you will anoint to be prophet in your place. (*Verse 16b*)

Protégé: Yahweh also gives Elijah a protégé who will eventually succeed him. He will now mentor a companion. All who have been given the privilege of being a mentor know this is fulfilling.

5. And, he escaping from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and, he escaping from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. (*Verse 17*)

Justice: Yahweh will execute justice on idolaters through the men He commanded Elijah to appoint. God often uses people to accomplish His plans to give His people the joy of working with Him.

6. I have left in Israel seven thousand: Every knee which has not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him. (*Verse 18*)

People: Yahweh's last gift to His depressed prophet: Elijah is told of seven thousand peers who share his devotion to God. Pleasant surprise, he is not alone! Overcoming depression requires mutual encouragement. In total Yahweh spoke a three-fold word to help Elijah deal with his depression. He has purpose for his life, a protégé to mentor and peers to support his mission of love for his God.

Yahweh speaks to those in depression

C. Jesus knows his troubled soul, because He must bear the sins of all, is how His Father will glorify Him. (*John 12:27-28*)

1. Now My soul has been troubled and what may I say? (*Verse 27a*)

Troubled: Jesus faced The Cross as both God and Man. His human soul was troubled for some time.

2. 'Father, Thou must save Me from this hour, but for this reason I came to this hour. (*Verse 27b*)

Obedience: He will follow the eternal plan in spite of trepidation: He will obey without question.

3. Father, Thou must glorify Thy Name; then came a voice from heaven: I have both glorified (it) and again I will glorify (it). (*Verse 28*)

Jesus' Plea: This is Jesus' ultimate prayer to His Father: That His Name will be glorified in Jesus' death on The Cross.

Father's promise: Jesus' Father says he has glorified His Name in Jesus' life until now, and He will continue to glorify His Name, even in The Cross. What seems to be defeat for those obeying God is always turned to God's glory in the end.

For us: And, we must realize that in obeying Jesus' command to take up our cross with Him, God will also be glorified in our suffering, and even death, for Him. Let us all live by the truth taught and modeled by Jesus that it is God's will His people share in His Son's sufferings in order to share in His Glory (Philippians 3:7-11; Colossians 1:24-27).

God glorifies those willing to die for Him

Conclusion: When Elijah sees that Jezebel has sworn to kill him, he flees to Mt. Horeb where he collapses in exhaustion. Then, when Yahweh questions him, he declares his despair of being alone in his devotion to The Covenant God.

But, God gives him work to do for Him AND declares Elijah has seven thousand like-minded men and so he is not alone.

Yahweh speaks to those in depression